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Olympic Council

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Dear Presidents,

Yesterday I received a communication from the Evergreen Freedom Foundation (EFF) that shook me up. It was a glossy publication with a number of statements and true quotes from real WEA members. I was initially struck dumb with anger and sadness. It talked about some tough issues. For example, wages made by WEA staff at headquarters, the amount of time and money spent by WEA on lawsuits, the availability of other more benign unions a person could join. It stated that WEA has an "agenda that often has nothing to do with education."

How can this be happening I thought? Who would contrive such an egregious action? How can half-truths and anonymous people slander the institution I have worked with and for these past 12 years? I felt such a need to defend! WEA staff at Federal Way is comprised of lawyers, accountants, Ph.D. research specialists, computer analysts and folks who generally make more money than education employees. You can't hire the best without paying them the prevailing wage. The truth about the 1997 case we lost had to do with a NEA worker on loan to the WEA for the express purpose of lobbying in Olympia. She stated on a disclosure form she worked for WEA not NEA. That was a violation of campaign finance reports so we were issued a warning.

I frittered and fidgeted and worried. What could I do to set the record straight? Then I realized in what had to be a God inspired moment that what I was doing was exactly what the EFF wanted me to do. Talk about a subversive act. I understood how the American soldiers felt in World War II when they received broadcasts from Tokyo Rose. This is a war. We are doing the right things because the opposition has notched up the attacks. And do not misunderstand; the opposition wants us to be afraid and turn in on ourselves. You have to ask the question why would a foundation spend the kind of money the EFF did to create, print, and mail this pamphlet? The right wing conservative coalition wants public education to be a thing of the past. They want your rights that have been hard fought to be gone! Collective bargaining, grievance procedures, academic freedom, and the right to belong to the largest union in this state are rights that if lost would be deadly to all of our members.

Yes, WEA has an agenda that often has nothing to do with education because teachers, bus drivers, para-pros, etc., aren't receiving an education when they go to work.... they are working! They are working in an increasingly polarized society where many people do not have faith in public institutions. People who work for public institutions become targets. Targets become the recipients of publications that ask them to leave the only power base they have. The publication states in bold, black letters that, *"Teachers Can Have Union Services Without Politics."* Folks, I have to tell you when Olympia determines my paycheck, when an elected school board determines if a fellow employee gets fired, and when Congress determines which child with which disabilities gets to be in my classroom, then I better be active in determining who will sit in those seats while they are making those decisions.

So my fellow Presidents, I am not sure what will happen next. But, rest assured that Charles Hasse and Dave Scott, the new President and Vice-President of WEA, are on the offensive. Charles stood in front of Council Presidents and stated that a new era has arrived in Federal Way. We won't be acting passive and hoping the attacks will go away. The Public Disclosure Commission members were served lawsuit papers last week. WEA has decided that the PDC has taken away a long-held right to political discourse in the workplace. I will keep you informed. Also, I am going to be at a meeting this Thursday and Friday with Charles and Dave so if there is any new communication I will pass it on. The first line of defense is a good offense. Keep your members informed and if you need me to come and talk at any local please give me a call and I will be there.

Thank you,


Patty Grenquist
WEA Olympic Council President